Met Office

January 2002

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1961-1990.

UK overview

A very mild month across the whole of the UK, with most places receiving near average sunshine. Higher than average rainfall over Scotland, but elsewhere close to normal.

A cold start to the month with temperatures down to -15 °C at Braemar on the 2nd, but temperatures as high as 15 °C by the end of the month. Stormy end to the month, with low level gusts as high as 74 knots at Barra and Lanark.

England and Wales diary of highlights

Very mild and changeable. Becoming milder after a cold frosty start and staying mainly dry till mid month. The third week saw conditions becoming more unsettled but still remaining mild. Very stormy during the fourth week, with severe gales and heavy rain in western and northern areas. Exceptionally mild towards end of month.

1st to 4th A dry cold mostly sunny start to the month under high pressure from Europe. There was widespread severe frost overnight, Sennybridge / Powys falling to -11.9 °C on the 1st. Snow lay thickly over the Pennines and North Wales northwards, 8 cm being common on higher ground. Freezing fog affected the Midlands and north-east on the 2nd. Milder with some rain in western areas later.

5th to 8th Though still under the European ridge, cloudy milder conditions replaced the old chilly surface air. However there was patchy rain and drizzle and fairly widespread hill and coastal fog to contend with.

9th to 12th Although high pressure persisted nearby on the continent, a trough in its circulation brought outbreaks of rain and showers to southern and western areas on the 9th & 10th. Elsewhere was mainly dry and mild with sunny spells but there was patchy mist and fog at times especially in nort-east England.

13th to 20th Active Atlantic depressions pushed their associated fronts and changeable weather across the region. There were outbreaks of rain and blustery showers, sometimes heavy with occasional thunder in western areas. It was mostly mild or very mild with sunny intervals but hill and coastal fog affected some places at times. The 20th was very windy with gusts up to 65 kn reported from North Wales.

21st to 24th More unsettled weather as low-pressure systems passing close to Scotland heralded a wet and windy spell. It stayed very mild apart from a brief northerly incursion later on the 24th. 25th- 28th A very stormy period as a number of intense depressions tracked north-eastwards past Scotland. There was copious rainfall in many areas during the 25th and 26th causing local flooding in places. Snow fell briefly over the northern Pennines on the 25th. One storm in particular on the 28th gave severe gales over North Wales and northern England with gusts up to 72 kn and over 100 kn on exposed northern hills. Mostly very mild temperatures prevailed throughout however with a number of stations reaching 15 °C.

29th to 31st The very mild but unsettled pattern persisted to the end. Active Atlantic fronts brought more rain and gales during the 31st depositing up to 50 mm (2 inches) of rain in parts of North Wales and Cumbria.

Scotland diary of highlights

Dry and quiet start, wet and stormy finish.

South-westerly winds blew almost continuously throughout January, making it a very mild month. However, there was a steady southward movement in the latitude band of the south-westerlies, so that high pressure at first was replaced by vigorous depressions later.

The first four days were dominated by a cold continental airmass blowing around an anticyclone over Europe. The weather was mostly dry and clear, with the temperature falling to -15 °C at Braemar on the 2nd.

The next 10 days or so were cloudy and mostly dry with light to moderate south-westerly winds. It took some time for really mild air to arrive, but it did so eventually, with the temperature reaching 14.3 °C at Lochcarron on the 12th.

From the 15th to the 21st a changeable westerly regime became fully established, with the influence of the European anticyclone finally extinguished. Consequently, rainfall amounts increased dramatically, with 20 to 30 mm being recorded somewhere on most days.

From the 22nd a series of deep depressions moved north-east close to Scotland, producing some vigorous weather. A brief northerly outbreak in the rear of a low on the 24th introduced some cold air, and as this was pushed away by active fronts on the 25th, most parts of Scotland experienced a substantial snowfall. On the 28th, a severe westerly gale brought down power lines, and bridges and rail transport were closed as a safety precaution. Over low ground, the highest gusts recorded were 74 kn at Barra and Lanark.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

Dry and dull at first, turning brighter but wet in the later part.

1st to 4th Snow lying on 1st and 2nd but rain and milder conditions then aided the thaw on the 3rd and 4th.

5th to 9th Dry but dull with only isolated light showers recorded.

10th to 17th Unsettled with showery rain. Good spells of sunshine between showers gave sunny days on 13th, 15th and 17th. Very mild from 11th to 14th with maximum temperatures typically between 10 and 12 °C.

18th to 26th Very unsettled with bands of heavy rain crossing the province on 19/20th, 22/23rd and 25/26th. Very mild on 19th and 23rd with highest temperatures of 13.5 °C being recorded in some parts.

27th to 31st Further unsettled weather with bands of rain followed by scattered showers and sunny spells. Gales were recorded on the 27th, followed by heavy showers and thunderstorms on the 28th. 31st was also wet and windy in many parts.

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